

DHSESA Newsletter

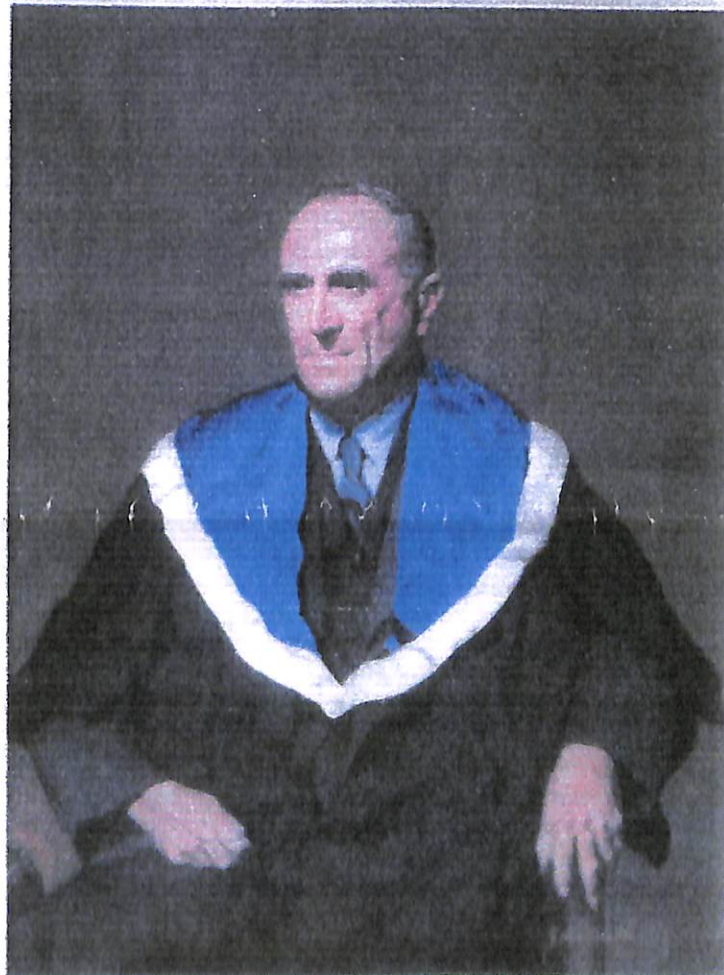
Mr. J. L. Griffiths, B.A., Dip. Ed.

**SUMMER
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INDEX

J.L. Griffiths (Family story)	2
Cover Story	3
1946 Matriculants	4/5
Robert Twyford	6
Bronwyn Mutton	7



Headmaster, 1937—1952

J. L. Griffiths by Dorothy Lloyd (his daughter)

The school was an extension of our Dandenong Home. The first call of the morning was often from the Station Master at Dandenong. The Gippsland train arrived at about 8.30 a.m. and on lively mornings order and quiet needed to be introduced among the arriving students. No one doubted that they were the concern of the school Principal.

The evening visitors were often parents and one or two teenage children. They would be shown into my father's bedroom. He retired often to rest his amputation and there were always easy chairs provided at the bedside. Concerns would include the propriety of school tunics fixed at six inches above the kneeling knee.

The parents could be assured of a sympathetic hearing from one who had been principal of a rural school at the age of 15. All his work towards matriculation had to be done by distance education while Principal of six consecutive country schools before the age of 19. Secondary Education, as developed under Frank Tate, was not yet generally available in the early twentieth century when most parents of the 30's and 40's would have needed it. There were many problems for them in understanding the issues of High School.

Parents and conservative teachers alike had to be led to acceptance of such modern notions as continuous class-room testing rather than the annual big hit of examinations.

Steady determination introduced new ideas into schools hobbled by wartime shortages of young staff, specialist teachers and material equipment. Triumph crowned the appointment after many applications, of trained music teachers and P. T. teachers.

The Principal's own experience of acquired disability may have contributed to an open attitude to handicapped students. It is, thankfully, hard to recall the frank discrimination which often excluded sufferers from epilepsy or diabetes from educational chances. Often Dandenong High accepted those who had been refused entry to other schools.

In mid-1915 Leslie Griffiths played his usual A grade tennis match and returned to Carlton by tram. A second tram crossed behind the one from which he alighted and caught his foot, severing at the instep. It was Saturday evening and the interns were in

charge of reception at the Melbourne Hospital. They concentrated on stopping the bleeding and did it very effectively. The leg became affected by gas gangrene and repeated amputations followed at the shin, and at the knee.

Additional infections developed. Repeated operations took place over the following year, ten in all, under the cruel anaesthetics of ether and chloroform. Healing of the skin grafts was inadequate. There was too little flesh to cover the wound properly. So it remained. All his weight had to be borne by the thigh muscles held up in the heavy leather prosthesis. He was never again without pain.

It was during his long period in 'Loch Taine', a private hospital in Rathdowne Street, that my parents became engaged to be married, as they were two years afterwards. At the time of his accident, J. L. Griffiths had completed his degree and Diploma of Education as one of the select "Diploma Twenty". This group of teacher trainees had been given the means to attend university regularly after Frank Tate introduced this scheme in 1911. J. L. Griffiths had been appointed to the University Practising School, later University High School, and he continued his work as Method Teacher in Mathematics for more than 20 years. He became President of the Victorian Teacher's Union, and later, Chairman of the Board of Secondary Classifiers. After he was appointed to Dandenong High School as Principal in 1937 he continued these activities, driving into the city in his modified car. He served on the Maths Standing Committee of Convocation and enjoyed working with the leading Maths teachers and Principals of Melbourne, from Government and private schools.

Leslie Griffiths tried to create a school community which minimised the militaristic overtones affecting some large schools between the wars. He believed that he should not offer to other families schools that he would not choose for his own children; so we four knew his schools from the consumers point of view.

I remember our house full of crepe-paper flowers to decorate stalls for wartime fetes. I remember serious gatherings of School inspectors and their serious discussions over sumptuous afternoon teas. I remember small squads of Empire Air Trainees being coached in maths *en route* to Canada. I remember young members of staff who did not return from the POW camps. I remember the annual party after Speech Night, our living room full of Staff and Advisory Councillors. The great days and jolly days of DHS were our great days too.

COVER STORY

The story behind THE portrait

The Matriculation Group of 1946 venerate their Principal.

Contributed by Bill Stanhope - DHS 1941-1946

The Matriculation Group of 1946 is one of our most pro-active ex-student cells.

They have met at least annually in recent years, and at their luncheon in November 2009 they were addressed on the subject of our cover portrait by ex-student, John Heath, the son of the artist, John Heath, and brother of Peter Heath, who also attended DHS.

Bill Stanhope, an erstwhile member of that illustrious group, has provided the following back story to the presentation of the landmark J. L. Griffiths portrait.

"The Ex-Students Association has dedicated the Percy Langford building and the commemorative entrance hall with its stained glass window to honour the school's founding headmaster. As well, they have set up a museum room with displays of archives and historic photos of other school memorabilia.

Therefore the 1946 Matriculation Group decided to search for a notable portrait of their headmaster—J. L. Griffiths (1937—1952), which was painted in 1944 and which was exhibited at the Archibald Prize of that year.

Their aim was to present a large, framed photographic copy of the portrait for the commemorative hall to honour their headmaster.

The 1946 Matriculation Group — whose members are now approaching their mid-eighties, still meet for reunion luncheons.

J. L. Griffiths was one of the school's longest serving headmasters—16 years. He guided the school through the difficult war years of 1939—45 with acute shortages of teachers, equipment and money. He was a very wise man and the 1946 group recognise just how much they owe to him.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

John Samuel Heath was trained by the eminent Australian portrait painter—Max Meldrum (1875—1955).

John Heath served as a stretcher bearer on Gallipoli with the 23rd Battalion 6th Field Ambulance, then on the Western Front, finishing as a Staff Sergeant dental mechanic. After demobilisation, he took the Dental Course at the Royal Dental Hospital, London. He returned home in 1922 and after further training set up as a dentist in Geelong. Later he progressed to a dental practice in Collins Street.

Max Meldrum was the leading portrait painter of the day and taught at the National Gallery Art School, but set up his own studio and art school—also in Collins Street.

So it was in 1930 that John Heath became one of Meldrum's pupils at the Collins Street school. Meldrum developed a painting style using light and shade to emphasise tonal values with a minimum of background detail.

The 1944 portrait of J. L. Griffiths was very much in this Meldrum style. Between 1938 and 1948, John S. Heath exhibited eight portraits of eminent persons at the Archibald Prize.

THE OAKLEIGH ART STUDIO.

In 1936, John Heath purchased an old bluestone Presbyterian church on 1.5 acres in Warragul Road, Oakleigh which he converted half into a residence and half as his painting studio.

It was in 1944, with two sons—John and Peter—as students at DHS, that he presumably selected J. L. Griffiths—an eminent person—as an ideal face and subject for a large, three-quarter length portrait in his academic gown, for his next Archibald Prize entry.

Eventually the painting was given to Mr Griffiths and his daughter Dorothy, one of our 1946 Matriculation Group who remembers it in their Stud Road, Dandenong home.

THE SEARCH FOR THE PORTRAIT

So began the search for the painting, not only by the Group, but also the artist's son—John Heath who had matriculated in 1945. He too became an orthodontist.

It turned out that after the death of Mr. Griffiths, the portrait went to his eldest son Phillip at Ballarat. On enquiry we found that it had been passed on to his daughter Phillipa and it graced her office as Principal of Traralgon High School.

With such a large painting, difficulties arose and time passed but eventually Len Lloyd and Dorothy Lloyd (Griffiths) had their daughter Anne arrange the delivery of the portrait to a commercial photographic studio in Carnegie, where the framed copy was completed.

At this time the 1946 group's two main searchers, Ken Dickinson & Bill Stanhope, were both hospitalised and subsequently both were not permitted to drive. So John Heath retrieved the portrait and stored it at his home. Smaller copies were printed for the Lloyd and Heath families and members of the 1946 group.

So the long search ended successfully with the portrait ready for presentation to the Ex-Student's Association to recognise a great headmaster.



1946 FORM 6 NAMES (Per Don Jackson)

Back Row Frank O'Shea, Phillip Newell, Ken Dickinson, Noel Courtney, Bill Stanhope, Colin Barraclough, ?, ?
Centre Row, ?, Norma Murphy, Dorothy Griffiths, Brian Logan, Miss Armstrong, ?, Mary Murphy, June Young
Front Row, Don Jackson, ?, Max Gregory.

(Anyone who can help with the missing names please let us know)



THE 1946 MATRICULATION GROUP @ November 2009. (L-R Back Row)
Colin Barraclough, John Heath (Guest), Bill Stanhope, Frank O'Shea, Don Jackson, Noel Courtney, Len Lloyd, Ken Dickinson, Max Gregory. Front Row - Brian Logan, Dorothy Lloyd nee Griffiths, June Goldsworthy, nee Young, Jean Dickinson, nee Falloon, and Pat Gregory.



ROBERT TWYFORD (DHS – 1952 - 1957)

My primary education was at Dalmore State School, which closed while I was in Grade 6. I spent the remainder of the year at Tooradin North, then commenced secondary school at DHS in 1952 in Form 1B. I was in Clematis House, and each day I travelled in on the bus from Koo Wee Rup.

I received a teaching bursary during Forms V and VI, which led on to a teaching studentship when I entered a Science course at Melbourne Uni. in 1958. After completing four years at University, my first school was at Ararat, where I spent two years.

During that time I also met my future wife, and Marie and I were married there in 1963. Following that we went to Hopetoun and Kaniva, during which time our three oldest children were born.

In August 1968 we left Australia and emigrated to Canada, at a time when many Australian teachers were being recruited. The passengers on the 707 included many former acquaintances from both our pasts, and resulted in quite a lively, informal reunion party. Looking back, this career step was a big step at the time, landing at Vancouver with a three year old and a three month baby in tow.

Our two years in British Columbia was our introduction to overseas travel, and was a most rewarding experience in many ways. We lived in two towns close to the Rockies, and travelled extensively through Canada and USA in our summer holidays.

Ties with our families saw us return to Victoria at the end of 1970, where I re-commenced employment with the Education Department "at the bottom" – previous experience (even in Victoria) was not recognized at that time. Our youngest son was born in 1972, and we lived firstly in Nhill, then Yea and Apollo Bay.

In 1979 we spent the year in USA on a teaching exchange from Apollo Bay. After two years at Euroa, I became Principal at Rainbow in 1984, where we spent over 10 years.

I took a Jeff Kennett early departure in June 1994, after more than 32 years teaching. Considering that I 'drifted' into teaching at the end of my University course, I count myself fortunate to have entered a career which I found challenging and interesting, and even more fortunate to be able to leave while I was still enjoying most aspects of it.

Since then we have lived at Barkers Creek, which is a few km. out of Castlemaine. Our three boys are long gone to various great "visiting locations", both within Australia and overseas. Since 1995 I have worked for the Department of Justice as a senior election official, and have been closely involved with many State and Municipal elections in the Bendigo area.

These days my main interests are family history, badminton, gardening, travel and our grandchildren (the reward you get for allowing your own kids to survive!)

"Impossible dream comes true"

SCHOOL FOR ORPHANS

Edited from 'The West Australian' - December 2012

Story by Joseph Catanzaro



"In the wild and remote reaches of Tanzania, where the Livingstone Mountains pierce the sky above the impoverished East African nation, retired WA teacher Les Mutton and wife Bronwyn made an astonishing promise to a man called Melodious Mlowe.

It was 2010 and Mrs and Mrs Mutton—both 67—gave the charismatic Catholic priest their word that they would help him build a school near his isolated village called Njelela.

Bouncing down a rutted dirt road in a four-wheel drive at the time, 900km from the nation's capital Dar es Salaam and 140 km from the nearest sizable town, it seemed an impossible dream.

Mr. Mutton had never been the type to back out of a commitment.

This is why that same year, the Capel couple decided to part with their nest egg and sold their investment property in Ferndale.

On 60ha in Njelela, a place where there is no cash economy and children made orphans by the AIDS virus abound in tragically high numbers, an unlikely dream was replaced with real bricks and mortar.

More than \$300,000 and two years later the Njelela Environmental Secondary School is next month due to open its doors to 200 poor African children who would have otherwise never received the opportunity to lift themselves and their community out of poverty through education.

The Muttons are not rich people. And this, they insist, is not a story

about charity. They said they just decided that the inheritance they had planned to leave to their children would be better spent, in a far-away continent, on children who needed it more.

Mr and Mrs Mutton's ties with Africa run back to 1992, when the couple spent 2 years teaching in a remote region of Zambia.

In 2007, Mr and Mrs Mutton's son Paul, a geophysicist, asked his father if he wanted to make some extra cash collecting mineral samples in Africa for mining company Lonmin.

This is how the retiree met Melodious, a priest whose tireless work bettering the lives of poor Africans impressed Mr. Mutton.

On this and subsequent trips to Africa, Mr Mutton saw the priest's fingerprints everywhere—a school here, and orphanage there, a new crop of fruit trees.

The Muttons wanted to help. The children they met in Njelela, many of them orphans, decided the matter.

"We wanted to give the children a chance," Mrs Mutton said. "We've seen what poverty is like. This is one chance to be able to help a community that seems to be quite full of initiative in their own way, but they're just short of the cash to go ahead and build their dreams and educate their children."

More information: www.njelelaschool.com.au

Bronwyn Mutton, who is featured in the picture above with her husband Les, recently travelled to Melbourne, and whilst here, called into the school to donate her old DHS Prefect's blazer, summer uniform and badges. Secretary Gary Matthews asked her in an email a little more about her experience in Tanzania. Bronwyn was the daughter of Mrs Howie, a Maths teacher at DHS—1957 to 1963. Bronwyn was a student in years 11 and 12, 1962 and '63.



Membership of the Association

Membership of the Association is taken to be for a calendar year, regardless of which month the payment is made. Some people choose the option to pay for 2 or 3 calendar years. If a new member joins in the last 3 or 4 months of the year, their membership is usually carried into the next year. These practices have been adopted to be in line with the rules of the Association and to create the least work for the committee.

SCHOOL BADGES

Available from our memorabilia collection, and can be purchased through the Association. Price is \$10, which includes postage within Australia.

- A. **Replica school badge;**
- B. **Stick pin;**
- C. **Special 90th Anniv. Badge.**

DHSESA Office Bearers

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- **Secretary — I. T.**
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The web address is www.dhs-exstudents.synthasite.com A further option for finding us is to do a "google search", and simply type **dhs ex students** , without clicking Australian sites, and you will see our site at the top of the list.

For further information, contact Gary Matthews by email at gazzcazz@hotmail.com or phone him on 5941 2507

If you would like to receive the Newsletter by email, please notify the Secretary, as we are considering this option. Also for those over 80 years, there are no annual fees. Please advise.